



house talk

bill halprin

Celebrate good news, new homes at Spring Homearama

DESPITE NEGATIVE NEWS about the housing market over the past few years, Americans still see investment value in home ownership. In fact, the Pew Research Center reported that 81 percent of those surveyed in March agreed that buying a home is the best long-term investment a person can make.

These survey results came out just in time to celebrate new homes at the Tidewater Builders Association's Spring Homearama, May 28 to June 12 in the Eagle's Nest in Virginia Beach.

Already, seven of the nine showcase homes are sold, so if you're interested in one of the remaining two, you better hurry.

Since the first Homearama in 1982, this showcase of homes was designed as a campaign to promote new houses and products for the home while educating consumers on the latest trends and innovations in housing.

This year, Spring Homearama marks a return to traditional Homearama-style homes. They're brick, or they have brick or stone accents. They run from 2,600 to 4,400 square feet and are priced from the low \$500,000s. Four of the houses have swimming pools.

Our designers and landscapers are going all out to help incorporate the wow factor into this year's theme, "A feather in your nest." The community adjoins 50 acres of conservation area, where many of our wildlife friends have already made their nests.

If you see something you like at the show, chances are you can take it home. Furniture and accessories will be for sale throughout the event, with price lists available in each home.

Since we open Memorial Day weekend, our traditional Military Monday now falls on Memorial Day.

We'll be offering two-for-one admission to our active and retired military, and pa-

triotic activities are being planned.

We're also excited about working with both NASA Langley Research Center and Old Dominion University on two of the theme homes.

At the "Space Exploration House," you'll see how NASA technologies have been adapted for our every-day use. In addition, you will meet former astronaut Susan Kilrain, who has logged more than 471 hours of space travel, from 2 to 4 p.m. opening day, May 28.

At the ODU House, we'll get a glimpse of the lifestyle of a diehard Old Dominion University alum, and we'll celebrate ODU Day on June 2. Coaches and Big Blue will be out to meet the fans.

Real estate agents can do "research" while enjoying their colleagues at the annual Realtors Day on June 1. They can get in free all day or come early for breakfast from Panera Bread.

Speaking of food, we're also excited to be working again with HR Magazine and Virginia Natural Gas to host the Taste of Virginia Beach from 6 to 8 p.m. June 6. Visitors can sample local restaurant fare in the homes and vote for their favorite.

So mark your calendars for your favorite things, and plan to join us for a celebration of new homes.

See you at the show!

Bill Halprin is president of Tidewater Builders Association, a not-for-profit trade association representing more than 700 member companies. For more information, visit www.tbaonline.org.

What rush? This home's designers and builder are ready for the show

By Nora Firestone
Correspondent

VIRGINIA BEACH

The rigorous schedule and challenges of building a Homearama house typically keep builders, decorators and landscapers on edge until pre-opening day judging.

Ask a builder if his or her plans include completion a month ahead of schedule and be prepared for a friendly grunt, if not a roaring laugh.

They anticipate certain stumbling blocks, beginning with the permit process, which has "gotten a lot tougher" recently, said Mike Thompson, president of TCI Inc., builder of The Cameron Lea, one of the houses in this spring's Tidewater Builders Association showcase of custom homes.

Homearama begins May 28 within West Neck's new Eagle's Nest development in Virginia Beach.

Additionally, foul weather, scheduling conflicts, materials delays and other variables play a role.

"In the end it gets kind of hectic," Thompson said.

Yet he stood calmly as he spoke in late April. No nervous footwork indicating that he needed to be somewhere else — 30 minutes ago — or had to hurry to retread the proverbial hamster wheel for another week of run-around.

Surrounded by a completely finished, exquisitely trimmed, detailed, painted and sparkling 3,200-square-foot home, Thompson had already escaped the frenzy.

Outside, the home's finished exterior, colorful landscape and swept grounds paved the way for others still emerging amid a parade of dusty flatbeds, sprawling scaffolds and yards of lumber.

And while there's no official prize for the category, crossing the finish line this far in advance has its rewards.

For starters, Bonnie and Dashana Jefferies, the mother/daughter team of Off Da Hook interior decorating and stag-



NORA FIRESTONE

Completed about a month ahead of Spring Homearama opening day, the sparkling Cameron Lea stood in contrast of the ongoing construction surrounding it.

going?

What Spring Homearama 2011, Tidewater Builders Association's showcase of homes

Where Eagle's Nest (at West Neck), Virginia Beach; at Indian River and West Neck roads

When May 28 to June 12; open noon to 9 p.m. daily

Cost \$10 per person; children 12 and younger admitted free. \$2 for seniors Monday through Thursday. Free to those in wheelchairs. \$3 off discount coupon available at www.hometalk.com.

Info www.homearama.tv

ing company, can get a jump on the themed decor — "transitional with a tropical flair, which means mixing a lot of colors, textures and natural elements," Bonnie Jefferies said.

Expect to see a one-of-a-kind, locally made maple desk bench with relief carvings, as well as custom-made furnishings by Heritage Amish Furniture, Levin's of Virginia and window treatments by S.R. Designs Inc., she said.

Accent colors will enhance such features as the master

suite's lighted tray ceiling, the kitchen's "golden butterfly" granite counters and family room's solid-slab granite fireplace surround.

Jefferies and her daughter have also invited students from Tidewater Community College's interior design program to participate.

"We will challenge them to think outside the box while incorporating function, mood and harmony," Jefferies said.

The extra time means that the project won't be as stressful on the students, which may enhance learning and relationships all the way around, she said.

Building only a few homes annually enables Thompson to be on site daily to face obstacles and help move things forward, he said.

"Getting everything ordered in advance and having it available helps me get a jump on (a project)" and maintain control, he said.

But the achievement "really comes down to scheduling" and reliable subcontractors, he admitted. "That's what makes you or breaks you. I can't do everything; I'm only as good as my team."

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